

July 22, 1961

Berlin

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MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Sorensen

I enclose a number of items which may be useful background material for your speech. Perhaps the most significant is Thompson's cable (Tab A). In general, I myself agree strongly with his balance of judgment, and I also choose paragraph 2 of his alternatives. This seems to me to imply that while the President cannot propose a specific negotiating position or forum or date on Tuesday, he can and should indicate not only our willingness to negotiate, but our intent to take the lead in making negotiation possible and fruitful -- a forward-leaning position, in other words.

Henry Kissinger's memo to me of July 21 (Tab B) develops this point helpfully, and touches on another aspect of it that I think is important -- namely, that the question of ways and means of negotiating is worth discussing in at least a general way with the American people. Too few of us understand the difference between merely stating a position and framing a workable process of communication and understanding. We must not let the word "negotiation" become a shibboleth. Our policy is to seek serious understanding without giving away the rights of free men. This we must do in concert with our Allies, and I would agree with the tone of the enclosed story by Murray Marder in today's Post. Marder says that we mean to lean forward on negotiation, and I think the President can usefully indicate that developing a major part of the Secretary's August mission with the major Allied Foreign Ministers.

A further memorandum from Kissinger telephoned this morning (Tab C) offers some language on a point that he thinks is urgent in the light of the documents that we have already sent to our Allies. Here the point is simply to avoid any confusion in our own ranks on the ancient issue of conventional vs. nuclear weapons. Because our build-up is mainly conventional, it seems to him important to make clear that our resolution on Berlin is not limited to such forces. The operative sentence marked "X" in the margin and any alternative language that does the same job will be helpful.

I further enclose a useful outline from Henry Owen (Tab D), much of which will be clear and familiar to you. It nevertheless may be helpful because of his unusually full grasp of what we really have and have not done so far. I like his notion of constructive actions, although I think it may be somewhat more fully developed in Walt Rostow's memorandum of July 20, which I believe you have.

I enclose an interesting possibility which comes out of Hilsman's part of the State Department, from a bright Soviet expert named John Keppel (Tab E). If you can fit it in, it might be useful.

One other point comes to me from a number of sources. If Khrushchev persists, he can certainly have himself a peace treaty with satellites and some party-lining countries joining with him. We therefore do not wish to engage the prestige of the U. S. and of the President in any violent opposition which will make that peace treaty look like a defeat for us. The right course is rather to laugh it off, and to point out as we have before how little it contributes to peace.

I took it from our telephone conversation that we see alike in thinking that this speech should be full of information, and should leave the American people with the feeling that they know where they are and why. To me this indicates a cool tone, a willingness to explain lots of things that are not very dramatic or awe-inspiring in themselves -- It means, in other words, an action version of the report on Vienna. My own sense is that the actions announced will carry much of their own meaning and that, therefore, the President will do well in a quite literal sense to speak softly while he describes his new big stick.

All of this, as usual, is sent on for you to take or leave. I asked the State Department whether there was any additional material that might be helpful to you, and Foy Kohler sent the attached (Tab F) which I have not yet had the chance to read. I understand that the paper clips indicate the points that he thought you might want to have in mind, and so far as I know, you may have all this material already.

I also send an interesting memo from Harlan Cleveland (Tab G). The back half of it is a detailed discussion of Berlin in the United Nations that is not relevant, but the first four pages contain some very thoughtful stuff that might well be useful to you.

McG. B.